

Message Text

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EXDIS

GENEVA FOR WISNER

E.O. 11652: GDS

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SUBJ: BASIS OF AFRICAN UNREALISM IN GENEVA

SUMMARY. FROM OUR VIEWPOINT THERE ARE TWO FACTORS WHICH TEND TO INCREASE THE MILITANCY OF AFRICAN NATIONALISTS BEYOND REALISTIC LEVELS AND DECREASE THEIR WILLINGNESS TO COMPROMISE IN GENEVA: THE OVER CONFIDENCE IN THEIR OWN MILITARY STRENGTH, AND THE INTERNAL WEAKNESS OF THE MORE MODERATE ELEMENTS AMONG THEM. END SUMMARY.

1. RECENT CONTACTS HAVE TENDED TO REFLECT A HIGH LEVEL OF CONFIDENCE AND MILITANCY AMONG AFRICAN NATIONALISTS AND FRONTLINE OBSERVER/CONTACT DELEGATES PLANNING TO ATTEND THE GENEVA CONFERENCE. INTELLIGENCE SOURCES (PARTICULARLY BRITISH CONTACTS WITH ZANU/ZANLA) GIVE THIS IMPRESSION AS DO CONVERSATIONS WITH ZAMBIANS IN LUSAKA. THE MOOD IS BASED ON A CONVICTION THAT IT WAS THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE FREEDOM FIGHTERS WHICH BROUGHT SMITH'S "SURRENDER," AND A FAILURE TO RECOGNIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SOUTH AFRICA"

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AND U.S. CONTRIBUTION TO IT. AFRICANS BELIEVE WIDELY THAT THE

FREEDOM FIGHTERS HAVE NOW BECOME A FORMIDABLE MILITARY FORCE CAPABLE OF DEALING WITH RHODESIAN DEFENSE FORCES AND INFLECTING A MAJOR DEFEAT ON THEM WITHIN A RELATIVELY SHORT PERIOD OF TIME. IT IS IN RECOGNITION OF THIS THAT SMITH FINALLY THREW IN THE TOWEL. THE ONLY WEAPON REMAINING TO HIM NOW, IT IS BELIEVED, IS DEVIUSNESS AND THE POSSIBILITY OF HIS TAKING ADVANTAGE OF A TRUCE TO RE-GROUP. IT IS TRUE THAT RECENT INTELLIGENCE HAS REPORTED MORE OF THE ATTITUDES OF THE EXTREME ELEMENTS IN ZANU AND ZIPA THAN THOSE OF ZAPU AND MUZOREWA'S ANC. FURTHERMORE, THE ZANLA/ZIPA GROUPS, AS WELL AS THE RECENT ZANU PRISONERS (TONGONGARA) MAY BE SUFFERING FROM THEIR ISOLATION WHICH TIME WILL MODIFY. IN ANY CASE, IT IS THE EMBASSY'S VIEW THAT THEIR ASSESSMENT IS AN UNREALISTIC ONE WHICH GREATLY EXAGGERATES THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE FREEDOM FIGHTERS AT THIS STAGE.

2. IF ONE WERE TO CLASSIFY NKOMO, MUGABE, AND MUZOREWA AS MORE REALISTIC AND REASONABLE POLITICAL LEADERS, ONE WOULD AT THE SAME TIME HAVE TO RECOGNIZE THAT ALL THREE ARE WEAKENED BY MORE RADICAL ELEMENTS WITHIN AND OUTSIDE OF THEIR ORGANIZATIONS. MUGABE HIMSELF IS SUPPOSED TO BE MORE REASONABLE IN PRIVATE THAN IN PUBLIC. HOWEVER HIS POSITION IN ZANU VIS A VIS TONGONGARA AND THE ZIPA FREEDOM FIGHTERS IS NOT STRONG. THE LATTER MAY BE NAIVE AND UNREALISTIC BUT MUGABE MUST LOOK TO THEM FOR SUPPORT. SIMILARLY, NKOMO, MUZOREWA, AND SITHOLE NEED TO BE CAREFUL NOT TO BE OUTFLANKED BY ZANU MILITANCY. OF THE THREE, NKOMO IS PROBABLY THE STRONGEST INDIVIDUAL. FURTHERMORE, HE HAS ASSIDUOUSLY SOUGHT TO BROADEN HIS POLITICAL AND FINANCIAL DEPORT BEYOND THE NARROW BASE WHICH THE MILITARY ARMS OF THE MOVEMENTS CAN PROVIDE. HE HAS BEEN CAREFUL TO KEEP HIS CONTACTS IN AFRICA AND BEYOND IN GOOD ORDER. HE IS NO AMATEUR WHEN IT COMES TO MAKING MILITANT PUBLIC STATEMENTS AND IS INCLINED TO DEFEND HIS POSITION IN GENEVA BY KEEPING UP WITH THE OTHERS.

3. IT WOULD BE HOPED THE FRONTLINE REPRESENTATIVES IN GENEVA WILL INJECT SOME REALISM INTO THE NATIONALISTS THINKING. BUT FROM WHAT WE HAVE SEEN HERE IN LUSAKA THEY THEMSELVES SEEM TO SHARE SOME OF THE ILLUSORY EXHILARATION OF THE "VICTORY" OVER SMITH AND ARE INCLINED TO WRITE OFF ANY SERIOUS REMAINING THREAT FROM RHODESIAN DEFENSE FORCES.

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4. IT IS EVIDENT THAT PUT TOGETHER THE ATTITUDE THAT THE NATIONALISTS HAVE WON THE WAR AND THE WEAKNESS OF THE MODERATE FORCES WILL HARDEN THE POSITION OF THE AFRICANS AT THE CONFERENCE AND INCLINE THEM TO EXTREME DEMANDS ON SMITH AND THE BRITISH. UNREALISTIC POSITIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN PUT FORWARD -- TONGONGARA AS MINISTER OF DEFENSE, BLACK AFRICANS IN CONTROL OF BOTH DEFENSE AND INTERNAL ORDER, INDEPENDENCE WITHIN 12 MONTHS, ETC. -- MAY HAVE BEEN ADVANCED SIMPLY AS BARGAINING POINTS BUT THEY

MAY ALSO REFLECT HARDER DEMANDS WHICH THE AFRICAN MAY STICK
TO LONGER THAN THE TRUE STRENGTH OF THEIR POSITION WARRANTS.
LOW

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